
The City Of Traverse City Police Department
851 Woodmere Avenue
Traverse City, Michigan
49686



PRESS RELEASE

Date: Thursday, February 12, 2015
Traverse City Police Department Detective Bureau

FRAUD/INTERNET SCAM ADVISEMENT

Local, national and international fraud via the internet is becoming more prolific and creative throughout the United States and International Community. Traverse City area residents are not exempt from being victimized and should be diligent in monitoring and protecting their financial accounts. They should also be aware of being used to facilitate the fraudulent activity and that if the information they receive seems "too good to be true" or suspicious in nature it most likely is. These suspects routinely locate local persons to assist them in cashing the forged checks through online "work at home" sites, social networking sites and online dating sites.

1-21-2015, Compliant #: 781-00564-15

A 39 year old Traverse City woman attempted to purchase a vehicle that was posted for sale on Craigslist which was much below its actual value. Upon the victim contacting the seller, the only payment that would be accepted was prepaid credit cards. The victim obtained the prepaid credit cards and pin numbers then related the information to the suspect who was able to electronically withdraw it based solely on the information absent the actual credit cards. The suspect stated he was from the Metro Detroit area but this has not been confirmed. No vehicle has been delivered and the suspect has stopped returning the victim's phone calls. The case remains under investigation by the Traverse City Police Department Detective Bureau.

2-6-2015, Complaint #: 781-00967-15

Bill Marsh Auto group reported an unknown suspect from the state of California had purchased numerous auto parts with stolen credit cards via telephone. The suspect had arranged for a local person to pick those items up, valued at over \$15,000 and ship them overseas to the country of Uganda. Bill Marsh was alerted when a victim of one of the credit card thefts in California contacted them directly and advised they had noticed the unauthorized financial activity on their account. The locally involved subject was identified as a 59 year old Traverse City man. He had become involved with the suspect through online dating/social network sites to include "Zoosk", "Match.com" and "Google Hangouts". The suspect told the Traverse City man that she worked for a pastor that was a missionary in Uganda and that she was originally from the Bahamas. Her mission work was to raise funds for their cause and that one method was to re-sell car parts at a profit in Africa. The suspect manipulated the local person with the promise of romantic interest and subsequently convinced him to assist them with retrieving goods they had purchased with stolen credit cards. He

received no financial gain and the auto parts were intercepted before being shipped. The case remains under investigation and will be forwarded to the Department of Homeland Security Investigation Unit specializing in international fraud.

2-9-2015, Complaint #: 781-01030-15

A Traverse City area business computer system was hacked and legitimate financial account information was obtained. Suspects from an unconfirmed location used the information to create forged checks. Two women have been identified as cashing the checks for the suspects, one being from the state of Alabama, the other being from Colorado. Both had befriended the suspects on social media sites, one on "OK Cupid" and the other on "Facebook". The suspect(s) asked the two women, who were not aware of each other and not related, to cash checks for them then forward the money via Western Union and Money Gram. In both cases the money was to be used as investment money in gold and silver. In one case the suspect stated he was from the state of Connecticut, in the other from London, England. The women received no financial gain. The task was performed after several weeks of on-line correspondence and promises of romantic interest. Maxbauer's Market discovered the fraudulent activity after the unwitting woman from Alabama contacted them directly once she became suspicious of the activity. This case remains under investigation in conjunction with the Federal Bureau of Investigation.

CC: Grand Traverse County Senior Center Network "No Scam Zone"